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***The Search for Salvation: Lay Faith in Scotland, 1480–1560.* By Audrey-Beth Fitch. Edited by Elizabeth Ewan. Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009. xvii + 206 pp. £25.00 cloth.**

Jane E. A. Dawson

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Mehmet's interests in Italy, the humanists' homoeroticism, or Platina's philosophical prison correspondence wind around a historical point of no real significance. Nothing came of the plot even if there was one, and all of the imprisoned "conspirators" were released. Humanism as a movement was unaffected, and the papacy itself would provide ample patronage to atone for its momentary vindictiveness. While D'Elia does shed light on this particular group of Roman humanists, how widely can this be spread? Finally, a few minor errors erupt here and there: early Christians did not "seek refuge" in the catacombs (6), and St. Peter's is a basilica not a cathedral (185).

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***The Search for Salvation: Lay Faith in Scotland, 1480–1560.*** By **Audrey-Beth Fitch**. Edited by **Elizabeth Ewan**. Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009. xvii + 206 pp. £25.00 cloth.

This important book fills a major gap in late medieval Scottish history and adds color and detail to our knowledge of pre-Reformation piety throughout Europe. It is a major triumph that the book, only three-quarters finished at the time of Audrey-Beth Fitch's sudden and untimely death, has been published at all. The sensitive editing by Elizabethan Ewan and the assistance of many of Beth's friends have made this possible and thereby brought into printed form the fruits of Beth's fascinating research. The visual aspect of lay faith in Scotland between the end of the fifteenth and the middle of the sixteenth century is portrayed in twenty-five black and white plates. A glimpse has been given of the color that would have abounded in the reproductions on the dust jacket from the Arbuthnott Prayer Book showing Mary as Queen of Heaven on the front cover and Jesus, the Holy Blood, and the Eucharist on the back. A short and useful glossary will help students to cope with the technical and specific terms that abound in late medieval religion.

The broad contours of the landscape of lay faith in medieval Europe are already familiar and apply equally to the kingdom of Scotland since it remained part of Christendom and adhered to the Catholic Church down to 1560. As well as sharing the common heritage of north European piety, the specific religious influences of Scotland's trading partners can be detected; for example, the cult of the Holy Blood arrived in Scotland thanks to the strong links with Bruges. However, there are some distinctly Scottish

touches, such as the addition by the Scots of the nails from the cross to their list of symbols of the Passion and the inclusion of the nails into some depictions of the *Arma Christi*. Using the terminology his fellow Scots understood, Walter Kennedy described the expulsion from Eden with Adam being “put to the horn, exilit fra goddis face” (48). William Dunbar displayed a piece of Lowland prejudice in his description of MacFadyen, a Highland piper, playing a lament for the dead in hell surrounded by a chattering group of Gaelic speakers and a severely disgruntled devil (56).

In her introduction, Fitch addresses directly many of the problems that beset a historian who is seeking to trace lay faith, especially among the non-literate laity. She dismisses the split between belief and practice as false and contends that for lay beliefs and practices, “‘action’ is taken to represent ‘thought’” (6). The book is organized around “imagery” in its broadest sense, extending beyond the visual to incorporate the spoken and written, built and manufactured. Within the minds of late medieval men and women these living images created a mental religious world that they inhabited and that made sense of their experience and helped them cope with their fears and their hopes. The frontispiece woodcut from the printed Acts of Parliament of James V published in 1540 illustrated that world with its depiction of the court of heaven surrounded by the roses of the Blessed Virgin Mary and with Christ on the cross superimposed whilst souls in purgatory and the devout prayed below. In the top corners St. Francis received the stigmata and St. Gregory’s Mass were illustrated.

Fitch decided to organize her book around these images or themes, starting where the laity frequently began by facing the last things, death and judgment and the “places” of the afterlife, heaven, hell, and purgatory. Only then are the supernatural beings discussed with God, Mary, and Jesus each given a chapter. The Holy Spirit and more generally the relations between the three persons of the Trinity did not feature prominently within the laity’s religious world and they receive a handful of comments rather than a separate chapter. The saints are another conspicuously missing element, and a chapter had been planned to address their role. However, this part of the book only existed in note form, and the editor decided that to write an entirely new chapter ran the risk of inadvertently modifying the author’s emphases and intentions. The adoption of this thematic approach has the great advantage of following the mental routes traveled by the laity and building up the layers of meaning within their world. It inevitably brings some overlap and repetition but this has been kept to the minimum.

The overall impression from Fitch’s detailed description of lay faith was people’s fear of a wrathful God and of judgment. To some extent this was balanced by the comfort brought by the Blessed Virgin Mary and her Son’s Passion that appeased God’s wrath. The extent to which Jesus’ humanity and

suffering were emphasized during this period and how closely Christ was identified with his mother is described with considerable subtlety. In the laity's quest for reassurance that they could attain the spiritual worthiness necessary for acceptance into heaven, they made increasing demands upon the clergy. Fitch brings strong Scottish evidence, such as increasingly detailed instructions in foundation charters or careful monitoring of religious services by town councils, to support the view among scholars of the pre-Reformation period that the laity were seeking "more" and "better" religion. Her book ends, "The Reformation was merely the next stage in the laity's search for salvation" (189).

This study admirably fills the gap that has existed in Scottish medieval studies and provides for students and specialists alike an excellent view inside the religious world of the laity. The publishers are also to be congratulated in producing the volume at a reasonable price that makes it accessible to a range of readers.

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***The Irish Contribution to European Scholastic Thought.*** Edited by  
**James McEvoy and Michael Dunne.** Dublin: Four Courts, 2009.  
320 pp. \$70.00 cloth.

I have read this collection of essays with three questions in mind: Who were the main Irish contributors, major and minor, to the European Scholastic tradition? What has been the lasting philosophical value of their contribution? Is there a form of (Irish) Scholasticism that can continue to make a contribution to European thought?

Many of the sixteen scholarly essays that constitute this substantial volume go a long way toward providing a thorough answer to the first question. Some of the essays deal in great detail with the work of the better known Irish thinkers—beginning, of course, with John Scottus Eriugena—while others provide generous introductions to more obscure figures. For this reader, the most informative essays are those on the more minor figures. I was pleased to read the two essays—one by James McEvoy, the other by Declan Lawell—on Thomas of Ireland, an early fourteenth-century interpreter of the Pseudo-Dionysius, who is better known for his anthology, the *Manipulus florum*. In a later essay, McEvoy provides a survey of contemporary sources of